

## **Texas Democratic Women of Collin County Candidate Survey**

If you would like to be considered for endorsement by Texas Democratic Women of Collin County (TDWCC), please return this survey to Meredith Fisherman, TDWCC GOTV Co-Chair, at [piper77@swbell.net](mailto:piper77@swbell.net) no later than August 22, 2008. Please try to limit your answers to two pages. If you would like to also submit a one-page bio/fact sheet about yourself please do so.

Bios and candidate survey responses submitted will be posted on our website for members to review. We will be holding a virtual vote via email, since we are not having our regular meeting in August. Please note that only members will be allowed to vote. Anyone can join TDWCC through our website at [www.tdwcc.org](http://www.tdwcc.org).

Should you have any questions, please contact Meredith at 214-417-6003. Thank you for your interest in TDWCC's endorsement.

I have spent a lifetime in education, retiring from the University of North Texas Department of English in 2002 after 36 years. My mother and grandmother were both elementary school teachers in Iowa. I have a double major in Education and Library Science from Iowa State Teachers College (now U.N.I.); a Master of Library Service from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Southern California. I practiced librarianship in two small teachers' colleges, including time as a campus school librarian. At U.S.C. I was Education Librarian until promoted to Associate Librarian for Public Services. I still serve on two committees at U.N.T. and maintain membership in several professional organizations. I put myself through college and graduate school, own my home outright, have no debts, and even bought a new car with cash.

### ***1) How do you propose we improve curriculum standards?***

Consult experts, people with both theoretical and experiential background in a field of study. In its July meeting the current SBOE decided that any two members of the Board could name someone to an advisory group on a specific subject. The Board must be very careful whom it appoints; it must also follow the group's recommendations. In May the Language Arts curriculum worked out by a well-chosen group who had met for 2 ½ years was rejected in favor of that of a conservative textbook company, incorporating only a few paragraphs from the experts. Most of the Board had less than an hour to read the curriculum in the form that it passed.

### ***2) Are you in favor of revising or ending No Child Left Behind?***

No Child Left Behind has worthy goals: improving teacher quality, making sure no group of children is neglected because of ethnic or socio-economic status, better technology in schools,. Lack of funding has impaired its effectiveness in attaining these goals. The requirement of assessment in basic skills (almost always multiple choice tests) is a disaster. Blind, mentally retarded, or non-English proficient children usually receive the same test. Topics not tested are frequently not taught. Texas should join the 22 states that currently reject its funds and its strictures, especially abstinence-only sex education.

**3) *What is your stance on teacher accountability and how teachers are compensated?***

Classes vary greatly in their backgrounds and abilities: teachers should not be paid only according to how well their students perform on standardized tests. A pay scale taking into account the teacher's education, experience, special training if applicable, willingness to take on extra projects, and classroom evaluations should be created.

**4) *What are your ideas to get more teacher input in curriculum and skills mandates?***

Committees of teachers who handle a particular subject area can be useful, as can mentoring of new teachers, but as long as schools live or die according to their scores on standardized tests, there is little flexibility for schools in curriculum or skills. More local control under state coordination and guidelines needs to be restored.

**5) *What are your views on TAKS tests being the sole requirement for passing?***

TAKS as it stands should be abolished and alternatives allowed, such as student portfolios (Vermont), work sampling (Michigan), or a Learning Record (California). However, a November 2007 news story shows that only 20% of children who failed TAKS in the fifth grade were not promoted, and only 5% of Texas children in general failed. Unfortunately 16.5% of ninth-graders failed. Was it to encourage them to drop out so they wouldn't take state tests later in high school and ruin the school's statistics?

**6) *What is your stance on teaching evolution and intelligent design?***

"Theory" in science means an integrated set of beliefs based on empirical evidence, such as evolution, which is based on fossil evidence, mutations, even bacteria adapting to new drugs. Creationism "impermissibly endorses religion," according to the Supreme Court. So does "Intelligent Design." Everyone has a right to one's religious beliefs, but these have no place in the curriculum; it must prepare students for college and for careers.

**7) *What is your stance on the elective Bible Study Course?***

When the Legislature required that an elective Bible Studies course be available in high schools, it mandated the SBOE to create a detailed curriculum, including how the Bible is used in literature, art, etc. The SBOE in July ignored this requirement, specifying nothing--not even what versions of the Bible are appropriate for school use. In this matter as in textbook selection details, it has ignored actual state law.

**8) *Would you work toward pre-Kindergarten education for all children in Texas?***

Yes; studies have shown that children who are properly prepared to begin school continue to do better even in high school. Exposure to the alphabet, to books, to playing with others, to handling crayons and pencils is not a part of all toddler's lives. Even some day-care centers do little more than warehouse the children in them. Let's pay for pre-kindergartens and not for prisons to hold the same individuals later in life.

**9) Would you work to support anti-bullying, anti-discrimination and GLBT acceptance in schools?**

Yes, as I have done in Denton. In 2002 I chaired a PFLaG committee that persuaded the DISD to pass an anti-bullying and discrimination policy including GLBT students. TASBE said we were among the first ten districts in the state to pass such a policy for gays and lesbians; we included transgender earlier than most of those ten districts.

**10) You state on your website that you will be a good steward of the Permanent School Fund. How do you propose to do that?**

I am not an expert in this field, but have listened to and consulted with experts, and would continue to do so. One important issue is dependent on the next legislature. Florence Shapiro's S.B.389 from the last legislative session needs passing. It doubles the amount of school bonds that the SBOE can approve, backed by the Permanent School Fund, saving taxpayers a great deal of interest with negligible risk